

# ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

January 28, 2013

---

## **Arkansas Republican House Caucus Pushes for Charter Schools (KARK-Channel 4)**

The Arkansas Republican house caucus is pushing for the creation of a charter school commission.

The caucus says charters promote competition and improve education quality.

The caucus also accuses the Arkansas Board of Education of being bureaucratic and anti-charter.

The issue will be debated by an education committee this coming Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, A+ Arkansas is hosting an education rally and summit in Little Rock.

The rally is set to begin at 9:15 a.m. at the State Capitol rotunda.

The rally will feature keynote speaker Jeb Bush, former governor of Florida and chairman of the Foundation for Excellence in Education.

After the rally, the group will host an education summit at the Double Tree Hotel downtown.

The summit will feature a panel discussion by teachers, administrators, education experts and policy makers to discuss the education crisis in Arkansas.

---

## **Minnesota falls behind on school choice ( Commentary by Patrick J. Wolf, Star Tribune, Minneapolis, MN)**

Back in 1991, my home state of Minnesota was a national leader in promoting the progressive reform of parental school choice. The Star of the North had begun allowing parents to claim a state income tax deduction for school expenses, including tuition at private schools, in 1955. In the 1980s, it pioneered the concept of public-school choice through open enrollment. In 1991, St. Paul became home to the nation's first public charter school.

These programs to help parents select and finance an education that serves the particular needs of their children mainly were championed by DFLers such as Gov. Rudy Perpich and state Sens. Ember Reichgott Junge and John Brandl. Republican Gov. Arne Carlson extended school choice, but the reality was that Minnesota Democrats owned parental school choice.

I was privileged to work with all of these great Minnesota policymakers. I interned for Brandl while a student at the University of St. Thomas; worked with Reichgott Junge to pass a telecommunications access law for hearing-impaired Minnesotans while a lobbyist for the Minnesota Foundation for Better Hearing and Speech, and was hired by Tony Perpich, the governor's brother, to set up the Minnesota Relay telecommunication center through the Public Utilities Commission (it is now run by the Minnesota Department of Commerce).

I left Minnesota in 1988 to pursue a doctorate in political science at Harvard. My mentor there was fellow Minnesotan Paul E. Peterson, a Concordia Cobber. (Who says that Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference rivals can't work together?) In the late 1990s and 2000s, while on the faculty at Georgetown University, I conducted scientific evaluations of private-school-choice programs in Washington, D.C., first for a research group that Peterson headed and later for the U.S. Department of Education.

In my research, I have found that parental school choice tends to produce better outcomes for students and parents. Both public charter schools and private-school choice, through school vouchers or tax-credit scholarships, increase high school graduation rates. School-choice programs also tend to improve student achievement somewhat, or at least keep pace with traditional public schools.

Contrary to fears that such decentralization might cause social division, choice programs have been found to promote civic values such as tolerance, volunteerism and political involvement at a higher rate than do traditional public schools. Parents are more satisfied with their child's school, and view it as safer, if they've had the opportunity to select it. No scientific study of private-school-choice programs has uncovered any negative effects of choice on any student outcomes. School choice is a big win for children and for the broader society.

Unfortunately, as America celebrates National School Choice Week, Minnesota has changed from leader to laggard on parental school choice. People who want to learn about choice programs now look to Louisiana, Wisconsin, Arizona or the District of Columbia instead of Minnesota.

The main blemish in the school-choice landscape in Minnesota is the lack of support for low-income students who want to attend private schools. Low-income, inner-city and minority students are exactly the kinds of children most helped by private-school-choice programs.

The tax deduction for private-school tuition is capped at \$1,625 per child for elementary school and \$2,500 per child for junior high and high school, leaving private-school options, which average \$5,000 in elementary grades and \$11,000 in high school, beyond the reach of poor and working-class families. Although the Legislature passed private-school-voucher and tax-credit scholarship bills last session, targeted to assist low-income students, those education reform initiatives were vetoed by Gov. Mark Dayton.

I now live in Fayetteville, Ark. This spring, my new home state is primed to enact a private-school-choice program for low-income children. If Arkansas succeeds, it will become one of 17 states ahead of Minnesota in providing private-school options to disadvantaged children.

Simply writing that sentence makes me pine for a bygone era when Minnesota was the guiding star for school choice.

*Patrick J. Wolf, who grew up in St. Cloud, is professor of Education Reform and 21st Century Endowed Chair in School Choice at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.*

---